

The InfoGram



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Silence is deadly: the first step in addressing the rise in suicides

As mentioned earlier this month, [suicide deaths among firefighters and law enforcement officers \(LEOs\) outpaced line-of-duty deaths in 2017](#), and researchers believe the numbers are actually much higher due to underreporting.

The number one action experts say will help the mental health crisis among first responders is to begin talking about it, starting within the department. It is much easier to [talk about witnessing traumatic events with someone who has been there](#) and seen what you have seen. Allowing a coworker to release the unseen pressure valve that has been building might save their life.

Expecting first responders to repeatedly see injury, violent death and the dark side of humanity but not have it affect them is unreasonable and naive. It's ironic that the "[suck it up](#)" attitude and push to be "strong enough" for the job might actually be perpetuating first responder suicides, as it discourages them from seeking help.

[Departments and personnel need to get serious about addressing mental health and job stress despite the "taboo" label](#). Research is one thing. Numbers and statistics have their place, but the first steps to solving this problem start in the station. There are programs available to help your department start the conversation:

- [Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance](#) workshops, self-assessments, resources.
- National Fallen Firefighter Foundation [Everyone Goes Home](#) program. Also, please take the time to fill out their [Survey on Suicide Prevention Efforts](#).
- [Carry the Load](#) program for all first responders, veterans and their families.
- National Volunteer Fire Council's [Share the Load](#) program.
- [CopsAlive.com](#) and [The Badge of Life](#)
- [Law Enforcement Survival Institute](#)
- The [Total Policing Wellness Project](#) requests your stories and tips on wellness for other officers and their families on all aspects of life and career.

(Sources: Various)

FBI report: Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted, 2017

The FBI reports [93 United States law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty in 2017](#). Numbers were split fairly evenly between felonious deaths (46) and accidental deaths (47).

The 2017 numbers dropped from 2016 in which 118 officers were killed. Of those, 66 officers were feloniously killed and 52 were accidental deaths.

Some details from the 2017 report:

- Firearms accounted for the highest number of felonious deaths: 42.
- Automobile accidents accounted for the highest number of accidental deaths: 29.

Highlights

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Electric car batteries provide minimal but extended fire risk



U.S. Fire Administration

The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.

- The average age was late 30s to 40 years old.
- Ambush killings accounted for five deaths; in 2016 there were 17 ambush killings.

More 2017 details are available through the FBI's [Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted](#) page. Reported results are preliminary. Complete 2017 numbers will be finalized and released this fall.

This week marks [National Police Week 2018](#), when we recognize law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Tens of thousands of officers and families visit the nation's capital for memorials, wreath-laying events, conferences and more throughout this week.

[Communities across the country are also holding events during this week to recognize service and sacrifice.](#) If your community isn't doing so this year, consider planning one for next year. You can also see if neighboring communities have events planned this year and support them.

(Source: [FBI](#))

Electric car batteries pose minimal but extended fire risk

Recently, an electric vehicle's battery pack caught fire after a fatal traffic crash in California. Engineers removed some of the power cells and the vehicle was towed. [The car's lithium-ion battery reignited three times over the next six days.](#)

Gasoline fires require an ignition source, but lithium systems contain their own ignition system. What's more, once one battery catches fire it can produce a chain reaction, catching all other batteries it is connected to. As in the incident above, the fire can reignite repeatedly over days or weeks.

[Firefighters must use different tactics for electrical vehicle fires](#) than they do for gasoline-fueled vehicles. Tactics normally used for gasoline fires may make the situation worse. The vehicle must also be stored differently after the accident as a safeguard.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) offers "[Alternative Fuel Vehicles Safety Training](#)" for the fire service, EMS, fire investigations, crash reconstruction, and tow and salvage communities. The self-paced, 4-hour training is free; students will receive a certificate upon completion.

NFPA also offers many other resources including [Emergency Response Guides from 30 alternative fuel vehicle manufacturers](#), free to download. At a minimum, be sure to watch the short "[Stranded Energy - How Little You Know Might Shock You](#)" video covering the basic but most important steps to take when encountering hybrid and electric cars involved in a traffic crash.

The good news is these fires are very rare. National safety agencies are investigating several recent electric vehicle fires, but have said it didn't believe electric cars were more susceptible to fires than other cars.

(Source: [NFPA](#))

The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC). For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

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